

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

1 1. A communications method, comprising:
2 detecting when a call to a telephone number
3 goes unanswered;
4 determining if the unanswered call is from a
5 member of a group identified in a stored set of
6 information associated with the called telephone number;
7 and
8 when it is determined that the calling party is
9 a member of the group identified in said stored set of
10 information:
11 presenting the calling party with a
12 list of other members of said group who have
13 provided telephone numbers for contact
14 purposes;
15 receiving information from the
16 calling party identifying one or more members
17 of the group who are to be included in a
18 conference call; and
19 initiating a conference call to any
20 group members identified by the received
21 information.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of
2 initiating a conference call includes placing calls to at
3 least two group members using telephone numbers
4 corresponding to said two group members obtained from
5 said stored set of information.

1 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

2 connecting said unanswered call to a telephone
3 switch peripheral device when it is determined that the
4 unanswered call is from a member of the group identified
5 in the stored set of information; and

6 wherein the step of presenting the calling
7 party with a list of other members of said group
8 includes operating said peripheral device to play a
9 message to said calling party including the names of
10 other members of said group who have provided
11 telephone numbers.

1 4. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step
2 of playing messages from multiple members of said group
3 to the calling party prior to initiating said conference
4 call.

1 5. The method of claim 4,

2 wherein said step of initiating a conference
3 call includes operating said peripheral device to
4 initiate calls to any group member identified by the
5 received information.

1 6. The method of claim 5, further comprising:

2 detecting when a call initiated to a group
3 member identified by the received information is
4 answered; and

5 bridging the answered call with the call from
6 the calling party.

1 7. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of
2 determining if the unanswered call is from a member of a
3 group identified in said stored set of information
4 associated with the called telephone number includes:

5 comparing a calling party telephone number
6 obtained using automatic number identification
7 information to a list of telephone numbers corresponding
8 to the members of said group.

1 8. The method of claim 2,

2 wherein the step of detecting when a call to a
3 telephone number goes unanswered includes operating a
4 telephone switch to provide call termination information
5 to a service control point; and

6 wherein the step of determining if the
7 unanswered call is from a member of a group identified in
8 said stored set of information associated with the called
9 telephone number includes:

10 operating the service control point to compare
11 a number obtained from the calling party to a list of
12 identification numbers corresponding to the members of
13 said group.

1 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 maintaining said set of stored information in a
4 location accessible to a telephone switch peripheral
5 device;

6 operating said telephone switch peripheral
7 device to receive information updating said stored
8 information;

9 generating an E-mail message including at least
10 some of the received information used to update said
11 stored information; and

12 transmitting the generated E-mail message to at
13 least one member of said group.

1 10. The method of claim 9,

2 wherein said step of operating said telephone
3 switch peripheral device to receive information includes
4 operating said telephone switch peripheral device to
5 receive a call from a member of said group.

1 11. The method of claim 10,

2 wherein said received information includes a
3 spoken message; and

4 wherein the step of generating an E-mail
5 message includes:

6 i) performing a speech recognition operation on
7 the spoken message; and

8 ii) incorporating at least some text generated
9 by said speech recognition operation into said
10 E-mail message.

1 12. The method of claim 9,

2 wherein said step of operating said telephone
3 switch peripheral device to receive information includes

operating said telephone switch to receive an emergency contact telephone number corresponding to a member of said group via the Internet.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the step of generating an E-mail message includes:

incorporating the received emergency contact telephone number into said E-mail message.

14. A communications system, comprising:

a telephone switch for receiving calls directed to a subscriber telephone number;

a peripheral device coupled to said switch including:

i. circuitry for accessing a set of information corresponding to the subscriber telephone number, the set of information including a list of telephone numbers corresponding to a group of individuals associated with said subscriber telephone number;

ii. circuitry for playing a message to a calling party who made an unanswered call to the subscriber telephone number, the message including the names of the group members who have included contact telephone numbers in said set of information;

iii. call conferencing circuitry coupled to said telephone switch for placing calls to

21 members of said group selected by the calling
22 party and for bridging said calls to the call
23 placed by the calling party to the subscriber
24 telephone number when said calls are answered;
25 and
26 a service control point coupled to said
27 telephone switch including control logic for instructing
28 said switch to connect an unanswered to directed to said
29 subscriber telephone number to said peripheral device.

1 15. The system of claim 14, further comprising:

2 means for allowing a member of said group to
3 update an emergency contact telephone number via the
4 Internet; and

5 means for generating an E-mail message
6 notifying at least one member of the group when an
7 emergency contact telephone number is updated.

1 16. The system of claim 14, wherein the peripheral
2 device further comprises:

3 means for receiving a call from a member of
4 said group seeking to update an emergency contact
5 telephone number stored in said set of information; and

6 means for generating an E-mail message
7 notifying at least one member of the group when an
8 emergency contact telephone number is updated by a
9 received telephone call.

1 17. The system of claim 14,
2 wherein said set of information is stored in
3 said peripheral device; and
4 wherein a duplicate copy of at least some
5 information in said set of information is stored in
6 the service control point.

1 18. A communications method comprising:
2 storing a set of information including a list
3 of members of a group associated with a telephone number
4 who may be contacted when a call to said telephone number
5 goes unanswered, the set of information including for
6 each group member who may be contacted, a contact
7 telephone number;
8 detecting when a call to the telephone number
9 associated with said group goes unanswered;
10 presenting the calling party placing the
11 unanswered call with a list of group members who have
12 contact telephone numbers stored in said set of
13 information;
14 receiving information from the calling party
15 indicating the group member or members who which the
16 calling party would like to contact; and
17 initiating a conference call using at least one
18 contact telephone number obtained from the set of stored
19 information corresponding to a group member indicated by
20 the received information.

1 19. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step
2 of:

3 providing the calling party with stored
4 messages corresponding to at least some of group members
5 who have contact telephone numbers stored in said set of
6 information.

1 20. The method of claim 18, wherein the step of
2 initiating a conference call includes the steps of:

3 placing separate calls to at least two members
4 of said group using contact telephone numbers obtained
5 from the set of stored information;

6 detecting when a placed call is answered; and
7 bridging each answered placed call with the
8 call from the calling party to establish a conference
9 call.

1 21. A digital storage medium, comprising:

2 a first set of stored information for providing
3 a communications service, the set of stored
4 information including:

5 i) a primary telephone number associated
6 with a first communications service subscriber; and

7 ii) a list of group members associated
8 with said primary telephone number,

9 iii) for each of a plurality of members
10 in said list:

- 11 a) a telephone number from which
12 the group member may call said primary
13 telephone; and
14 b) a telephone number which can
15 be used to contact said group member.

1 22. The digital storage medium of claim 21, wherein the
2 first set of stored information further comprises, for
3 each of said plurality of members in said list:
4 an E-mail address associated with the group
5 member.

1 23. The digital storage medium of claim 22, wherein the
2 first set of stored information further comprises, for
3 each of said plurality of members in said list:
4 a message provided by said group member.

1 24. The digital storage medium of claim 22, wherein the
2 first set of stored information further comprises, for
3 each of said plurality of members in said list:
4 an E-mail notification indicator used to
5 indicate if said group member wants E-mail notification
6 when a change is made to one or more pieces of
7 information included in said first set of stored
8 information.

1 25. The digital storage medium of claim 24,
2 wherein the first set of stored information
3 further comprises, for each of said plurality of
4 members in said list:
5 a personal identification number.

1 26. The digital storage medium of claim 23, further
2 comprising:
3 a second set of stored information
4 for providing a communications service, the second
5 set of stored information including:

6 i) a second primary telephone number
7 associated with a second communications service
8 subscriber; and

9 ii) a second list of group members
10 associated with said primary telephone number,

11 iii) for each of a plurality of members
12 in said second list:

13 a) a telephone number from which
14 the group member may call said second
15 primary telephone; and

16 b) a second telephone number
17 which can be used to contact said group
18 member.